

Sunday 24 January 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

As we prepare for worship this morning – let us sing or say-

Hymn: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus - <https://youtu.be/UnX1hRZi0-w>

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in his wonderful face
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.
Helen Howarth Lemmel (1863-1961)

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of Mankind - (Stf 495) - <https://youtu.be/WqOnjmr9Ah0>

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| <p>1.
Dear Lord and Father of mankind
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.</p> | <p>2.
In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.</p> | <p>3.
In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.</p> |
| <p>4.
With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of thy call,
as noiseless let thy blessing fall
as fell thy manna down.</p> | <p>5.
Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and
stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.</p> | <p>6.
Breathe through the heats of our
desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake,
wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm!
<i>John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)</i></p> |

Let us pray together:

Lord God, despite the restrictions placed upon us and the circumstances in which we are living in these days, we are thankful that we can turn our eyes upon you to praise and worship you the living God, drawing comfort in the knowledge of your gracious and compassionate nature.

We are conscious Lord of those who have not been able to meet with others, concerned perhaps not to be in other people's company because of health reasons. We think of them now, think of them sitting where they normally would be on a Sunday in church.We ask you Lord, to bless them, just where they are now, uniting us together through the love of Christ. Amen.

Prayer of confession:

Gracious God, you offer us new life in Christ, yet so often we try to live in our own way and in our own strength. We stray from the paths you want us to follow. Forgive us for our half-hearted efforts, our self-centredness, our selfish prayers. Challenge our minds and hearts and lead us towards your truth.

Hear good news. For all who put their trust in Christ. Jesus says: 'Your sins are forgiven.' Amen. Thanks be to God

Today's Reading from the Old Testament Jonah 3:1-5,10

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14-20

Time to Reflect

Just as Jesus called Peter and Andrew, James and John, so he calls us to follow him. Just as they had to make a decision to do so, so do we. He calls us because he wishes to make us more useful to him, to make our lives more fruitful in the changing world around us. It's a challenge because to follow him, means letting him take the lead. If he says do it, we do it. If he says don't do it, we don't do it.

Following Jesus means accepting him as the way, as far as our lives are concerned, taking him as the truth. God's truth to us. It means accepting that he is the life, our life, and without him there is no life as God intended it to be. So, if that is the case, the question is.....How are we doing - answering his call and following him? You see, following Jesus is a transforming work, a continuing work because the day we came to the Lord was only a beginning of a conversion process that started and goes on and on. It really means 'our becoming something we were not'. So, are we further forward now than when we made that commitment to be a follower? We can answer that question for ourselves because we know, if over the years, we have been able to do things that before we just couldn't do. Like, talk to other people about our Christian experience, discuss God's word with one another, share our doubts as well as our joyful discoveries; being aware of the knowledge of God's help at our side at difficult times.

Can we say now that, looking back, we have known his presence and direction in our lives? Do we continue to do so? And what about the future? Those disciples Jesus called had no idea where his call would take them. They just went with him and continued to follow him which is what he expects of us too. Take a time to sit quietly.....

A time of prayer

Lord God, throughout history you have called people to respond to your challenge to follow you, undaunted by the task to which they were called believing that you would guide and lead them, inspire and enable them to fulfil the work to which they were called. We give thanks for those whose faithful discipleship and friendship encouraged and guided us. Help us to learn from their example and to respond faithfully and willingly whenever you call. Help us to have faith to follow wherever you lead.

We ask these prayers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and share together in the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven

Hymn: Spirit of God unseen as the wind - (Stf 394) - <https://youtu.be/uGiCOx1obNg>

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove,
teach us the truth and help us
believe, show us the Saviour's love.

You spoke to us long, long ago,
gave us the written word;
we read it still, needing its truth,
through it God's voice is heard.

Without your help we fail our Lord,
we cannot live his way;
we need your power, we need your
strength,
following Christ each day.

Margaret V. Old (1932-2001)

A prayer of blessing: May the Lord bless us and keep us in his love as we answer his call to follow and serve him in the world today. **Amen**